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Oswald threat revealed

Note to FBI destroyed; Kennedy not named

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Lee Harvey Oswald personally carried a "threatening" letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation office here several days prior to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, The Dallas Times Herald has learned.

The letter, which apparently did not mention President Kennedy, was destroyed by FBI personnel shortly after the assassination and its existence never was revealed during intensive investigation by the Warren Commission, according to sources within the FBI.

The FBI has launched a full internal inquiry into the Oswald visit and possible criminal violations in connection with destruction of the note and failure to report its existence.

In response to inquiries by The Times Herald, FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley said Saturday that an investigation "tends to substantiate that Lee Harvey Oswald visited the Dallas FBI office several days prior to the assassination of President Kennedy."

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Kelley said Oswald visited the office "apparently as the result of an interview by an FBI agent of his (Oswald's) wife Marina, in connection with the FBI investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the assassination."

FBI agents had made contact with

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"The Dallas Times Herald"
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Oswald's wife on Nov. 1, 1963, only 21 days before the assassination. Another visit to her Irving home was made on Nov. 5, but it was not successful.

The FBI probe into Oswald's visit was launched as a result of questions asked by The Times Herald during a July 6, 1975, meeting with Kelley in Washington FBI headquarters. The Times Herald has been checking the previously unreported incident for more than two months.

In a statement prepared for The Times Herald Saturday, Kelley said: "Oswald left a note addressed to this agent, and, although recollections vary as to the wording of the note, it was for the purpose of warning the agent to desist from further interviews with his wife."

"Prior to the current FBI inquiries, there had been no information concerning this visit and note recorded in FBI records, and inquiries tend to corroborate that shortly after the assassination, the note in question was destroyed," he said.

Kelley said Saturday that "inquiries are continuing to determine the full facts concerning the handling of this matter." Kelley said Attorney General Edward Levi is being kept informed on the progress of the investigation.

Apparently those personnel in Dallas FBI offices at the time who knew of Oswald's visit and his letter have kept the incident secret for almost 12 years, sources told The Times Herald.

A person assigned to the FBI office at the time of the assassination said of the visit: "Oswald left a threatening note . . . he wanted the agent in charge of his wife's case to quit harassing Marina."

"I didn't actually see the note myself, but I know it existed. There were no more than a very few, at most five or six, who saw the letter. One of these was a secretary I understand has been transferred.

"I honestly don't believe that Mr. (J. Edgar) Hoover or Mr. (J. Gordon) Shanklin ever knew of the existence of the letter. They would have gone through the roof," the source said.

Shanklin was special agent in charge of the Dallas FBI offices during the Kennedy assassination until retirement from that position this past June.

Contacted by The Times Herald Saturday, Shanklin said: "I am cooperating with the FBI internal investigation on this. I never knew of it. If Oswald came by (the Dallas FBI office), I didn't know."

The Times Herald has interviewed Shanklin twice on this report, first when preliminary information was gathered by the newspaper and again on Saturday following Director Kelley's statement to The Times Herald. During both interviews, Shanklin maintained he had no prior knowledge of Oswald's visit or a threatening letter.

The Times Herald was told by a source within the FBI that following the assassination the note was destroyed. "After the assassination, they destroyed it," he said.

Asked to identify who "they" were, the FBI source only would state: "other personnel in the Dallas offices . . . you'll have to ask Hosty or Howe about that. I've told you all I'm going to say on that."

James P. Hosty Jr., who is now assigned to the Kansas City FBI offices, was agent in charge of the Marina Oswald security-check investigation in Dallas. Agent Ken Howe was Hosty's supervisor. Howe was transferred to the Seattle FBI offices approximately one year after the assassination, an FBI source said.

Contacted by telephone Saturday in Kansas City, Hosty was asked if he knew of the letter's existence.

"I don't know anything about that," Hosty said. "Not that I . . ., I'm sorry, I'm afraid I can't make any comment on this. I don't know what you're talking about."

Hosty repeatedly declined to discuss anything about the Oswald letter, referring all questions to Kelley.

"Well, like I say, you can see my position, I'm not in a position to say anything on that. I think I'm right, so, I'll just go along and take orders. I sure hope so."

Howe now is assigned to the FBI office in San Diego, Calif. Attempts to reach Howe by telephone late Saturday were not successful. He had not returned messages left with the FBI there.

Marina and her two small children had been living with Mrs. Ruth Paine at 1525 W. Fifth St., in Irving since their return from New Orleans the last week of September, 1963. Mrs. Paine was separated from her husband, Michael, and she befriended the Oswalds a year earlier when they were becoming active socially with several other Russian-speaking persons in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

A source said: "Prior to Lee Harvey Oswald's visit to the FBI offices, FBI agents had visited the Paine home in Dallas where Marina Oswald was living.

"Marina became frightened during routine questioning, partly because of her inability to understand English well. Lee was not there at the time, and the agent left.

"I understand Marina took down ap- Warren Commission exhibits," th: e said.

"Apparently, Oswald became upset when Marina told him about the FBI visit. . . . I believe that's what prompted his coming by the offices . . . and the threatening letter."

Shanklin confirmed the Paine home visit by Dallas office FBI agents prior to the assassination. He said they went by looking for Oswald on a routine security check. "Hosty did go by Mrs. Paine's house looking for Oswald. He wasn't there," Shanklin said.

Shanklin said he had "heard reports" that Oswald had been in a garage adjacent to the downtown FBI offices prior to the assassination, but that he had been unable to verify that report.

"I never could check that report out," he said. At the time, FBI offices were in the Santa Fe Building in downtown Dallas.

Marina Oswald had met Lee Harvey in her native Russia. The routine check on her and her husband was a result of their having lived in the Soviet Union. During the 1950s, the FBI kept regular checks on persons having lived in Communist-bloc countries.

A Times Herald source said neither Oswald's visit to the Dallas FBI offices nor the "threatening letter" resulted in placing Oswald under active surveillance prior to President Kennedy's Nov. 22 visit to Dallas.

"That was the real screwup, I guess," the source said. "We did not tell police or other protective agencies about it . . . It seemed routine at the time of his visit. Nuts and threatening mail come in all the time. The letter didn't threaten Kennedy. It said Hosty should quit harassing Marina, I believe."

"It wasn't until after the assassination that the full impact of this thing hit . . . Those who knew about it (Oswald's letter and visit) never told about it . . . I guess because they never were asked about it . . . they never disclosed it.

"In my judgment, this information coming out will blow the lid off the whole damn case. I worry about it very much . . . since it looks like, you know, another government coverup.

"I am worried it will further damage the FBI. It was a bureaucratic screwup. Nobody did the followup on it, and the letter was destroyed. They didn't want anybody to know that Oswald had come by the offices, that he had left a threat, that we had failed to put him under surveillance."

Deputy Director James B. Adams of the Washington offices of the FBI said Saturday that other than Kelley's statement they would have no further comment on the investigation until "all inquiries have been concluded and the matter considered by the department."

Statement from the FBI

Statement by Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Clarence M. Kelly, issued to The Dallas Times Herald Saturday by Associate Director James B. Adams:

"FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley confirmed today (Saturday) that inquiries conducted in response to questions asked by The Dallas Times Herald tend to substantiate that Lee Harvey Oswald visited the Dallas FBI office several days prior to the assassination of President Kennedy, apparently as the result of an interview by an FBI agent of his wife Marina in connection with the FBI investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the assassination which was documented in the Warren Commission report. Oswald left a note addressed to this agent and although recollections vary as to the wording of the note, it was for the purpose of warning the agent to desist from further interviews of his wife.

"FBI inquiries to date establish that the note contained no references to President Kennedy or in any way would have forewarned of the subsequent assassination. Prior to the current FBI inquiries, there had been no information concerning this visit and note recorded in FBI records, and inquiries tend to corroborate that shortly after the assassination, the note in question was destroyed.

"Inquiries are continuing to determine the full facts concerning the handling of this matter.

"The Attorney General has from the inception been kept informed of the progress of FBI inquiries to date. Director Kelley has indicated that there will be no further comment for publication until all inquiries have been concluded and the matter considered by the department."